

Legislative work—cont.'d

Reducing the difference in reimbursements between rural and urban facilities. Rural hospitals receive less federal funding than hospitals in urban areas for providing the same services. This legislation would raise base payments to rural hospitals to the same level as those in urban areas.

Improving opportunities for rural facilities to recruit and retain health care professionals. Payments to hospitals would be improved in order to recruit more health care professionals to rural hospitals. A shortage of trained health care professionals is hurting the delivery of quality health care in rural communities.

Providing opportunities for infrastructure improvements. Programs to provide funding for important improvement projects to rural health care facilities are reauthorized under this legislation. Funds can be used for infrastructure needs, as well as rural health planning, network development and rural emergency medical services.

Children's Hospital

Congressman Nunes signed a letter to Congressman Ralph Regula (R-OH), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, supporting equitable graduate medical education funding for our nation's independent children's hospitals. The children's hospital Graduate Medical Education (GME) program was funded at \$292 million for fiscal year 2003. Congressman

Nunes expressed his support for previous funding levels, as well as a desire to see continued bipartisan support for reauthorization and appropriations.

Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH)

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored H.R. 328. The bill repeals reductions in the disproportionate share hospital (DSH) program. These reductions were the result of changes made to the program under the Balanced Budget Act. The DSH program provides additional dollars to hospitals serving large numbers of uninsured and indigent patients. Reductions in DSH payments are devastating to San Joaquin Valley hospitals, which serve large numbers of uninsured patients.

Hispanic Issues

Congressman Nunes became an original co-sponsored of H.R. 2238, a bill to strengthen the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) program. This legislation establishes a competitive grant program to expand post-baccalaureate degree opportunities at HSIs. Current law only provides support for two-year and four-year institutions. This legislation will establish a long overdue graduate program for HSIs. It will also reduce regulatory burdens and paperwork for institutions participating in these programs, such as CSU Fresno, Reedley College, Porterville College, College of the Sequoias, and Fresno City College.

Homeownership

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored the American Dream Down-payment Act, H.R. 1275, which will provide communities throughout America with \$200 million in grants. The grants are designed to set first-time, low-income homebuyers on the path to homeownership by helping with down-payment and closing costs.

Labor

Congressman Nunes wrote a letter to the Department of Labor supporting the work of Proteus, an arm of the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, for a National Farmworker Jobs Program. This grant would greatly assist in continuing Proteus' commitment to provide education, employment training, and community services to the farmworker community, and in turn the agriculture industry of the region.

Lao & Hmong Veterans

Rep. Nunes honored Lao and Hmong veterans from the Vietnam War with a commendation and citation for their service. The commendation read: "For the courageous defense of your people and homeland against communist aggression, as well as your support and sacrifice on behalf of United States' military and clandestine forces, 1961-1975, we express our deepest gratitude to you and your family.

Ethnic Laotian and Hmong members of the U.S. Secret

Army fought in the Vietnam campaign in critical air and ground operations as pilots, air crews, soldiers and in special guerilla units in support of Air America, the U.S. "Air Force Ravens" Program, the U.S. Army Special Force's White Star Teams and in other joint American and Royal Lao Armed Forces clandestine and military efforts.

Now, therefore, in commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the fall of the Kingdom of Laos to communist forces in May of 1975, and in honor of you and your family's sacrifices on behalf of U.S. national security and the Kingdom of Laos, we confer upon you this commendation and citation for the long overdue national recognition and honor that you so rightly deserve."

Taxes

Congressman Nunes co-sponsored the Distilled Spirits Tax Equity Act which would provide relief to spirit wholesalers from their prepayment of the federal excise tax (FET). This bill would create a pre-paid tax adjustment (PTA) or non-refundable tax credit to these wholesalers based on the average amount of time a product is held in inventory. Currently, wholesalers are not required to pay the FET on imported spirits until after product is removed from a bonded warehouse for sale to a retailer, yet they have to pay this tax on all domestically produced spirits as a cost for holding in-

See next page